Introduction:

* Political ads can communicate, persuade, and even entertain. A 30-second ad can be an effective tool for convincing voters to support a candidate. Ads can target general or specific audiences, and they can be effective or ineffective in different ways or for different reasons. They use **emotion**, **persuasion**, **factual claims**, and **cinematic style** to influence voters. In this activity, you will view and analyze selected presidential campaign advertisements and develop criteria for evaluating what makes a political ad effective.

Procedure:

* Step One: You are creating an ad for a presidential candidate. Answer the questions below:
  + *Who would your audience be? Would it be a general audience, or would you want to target a specific group?*
  + *What would you want viewers to think about your candidate?*
  + *What arguments would you want to make? How would you support these arguments?*
  + *How would you want viewers to feel about the candidate?*
  + *How would you want viewers to think and feel about the candidate’s opponent?*
* Step Two: Watch the ads “[Yes We Can](http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/commercials/2008)” (Obama 2008) and “[Surgeon](http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/commercials/1996)” (Clinton 1996) – Look through th thumbnails at the bottom to find the correct commercials. For each ad, answer the following questions:
  + *Does this ad target a general or specific audience? How do you know?*
  + *Do you think these ads were effective? Why or why not?*
  + *“Yes We Can” was a web ad that targeted young voters. Why was this audience important in the 2008 election?*
  + *What are some other audiences political campaigns might want to target? Think about age, race, social class, gender, and religion.*
* Step Three: Evaluating Emotion – Find the ads listed below on the playlist found [here](http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/commercials/playlists/expert/admaker). Then, answer the questions that follow (for each ad). The rubric referenced in the fourth question is on the last page of this document.
  + "Prouder, Stronger, Better" (Reagan, 1984)
  + "Celeb" (McCain, 2008)
  + "Taxes" (Nixon, 1960)
  + Questions:
    - *How do you think the makers of the ad want you to feel? How do you know? How does the ad actually make you feel? Does the ad succeed?*
    - *What is the tone of the ad? (For example, is it inspirational, hopeful, frightening, sarcastic, etc.?)*
    - *What is the ad’s argument? Does the tone reflect the argument? Why or why not?*
    - *How would you rate the ad’s emotional appeal on the rubric’s scale of 1 to 4 for emotion?*
* Step Four: Evaluating Persuasion – Find the ads listed below on the playlist found [here](http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/commercials/playlists/expert/admaker). Then, answer the questions that follow (for each ad). The rubric referenced in the fourth question is on the last page of this document
  + “McGovern Defense" (Nixon, 1972)
  + "Accountability" (Gore, 2000)
  + "Voting Booth" (McGovern, 1972)
  + Questions:
* *What is the central issue of this ad? Does the ad tell you why this issue is important?*
* *What is the ad's argument? How does the ad support its argument? Is it convincing?*
* *How would you rate the ad on the rubric's scale of 1 to 4 for persuasion?*

#### ASSESSMENT RUBRIC: WHAT MAKES AN EFFECTIVE AD?

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Â | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| **Emotion** | Establishes no clear tone; it is difficult to determine how the maker of the ad wants viewers to feel. | Establishes a tone, either positive (such as inspirational or hopeful), negative, (such as frightening or sarcastic), or mixed (partly positive, partly negative) that can be identified, but its relationship to the argument is confused; it is somewhat clear how the maker wants viewers to feel. | Establishes a positive, negative, or mixed tone that somewhat reflects its argument; it is clear how the maker wants viewers to feel. | Establishes a strong positive, negative, or mixed tone that clearly advances its argument and the effect of that argument; it is clear how the maker wants viewers to feel; achieves the desired emotional effect. |
| **Persuasion** | Central issue is not identified; makes no argument; the point of view is unclear. | Central issue is partially defined; makes an argument; point of view is somewhat clear. | Central issue is clearly defined; makes an argument that is logical; point of view is clear. | Central issue is clearly defined, and the importance of this issue is demonstrated; makes an argument that convinces with logic and evidence; point of view is presented strongly. |
| **Truth** | Presents few or no factual claims. | Presents a limited number of general factual claims with minimal reference to sources. | Presents multiple general or specific factual claims with reference to at least one reliable source. | Presents multiple specific factual claims with clear references to multiple reliable sources. |
| **Style** | Use of images, sounds, and music does not communicate a political idea or create a dramatic effect (such as amusement or inspiration) | Use of images or sounds at least contributes to communicating a political idea or creating a dramatic effect. | Use of images, sounds, and music together communicates political ideas, organizes ideas into an argument, and creates a dramatic effect. | Use of moving and still images, sounds, music, editing, and transitions together succeeds in communicating political ideas, organizing complex arguments, and creating a powerful dramatic effect. |